

Government of the District of Columbia
ZONING COMMISSION



June 21, 1974

ZONING COMMISSION ORDER NO. 85

CASE NO. 72-19P

Pursuant to notice, a public hearing of the Zoning Commission was held on February 28 and May 2, 1973, to consider the preliminary application for a planned unit development and related zone change, filed by Joseph F. Horning, Jr.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The site of the proposed planned unit development is bounded by Gallatin Street on the north, 16th Street on the east and 14th Street on the west, all in N.E. Washington, D.C.; lot 32 in Square 3997.

2. The area of the subject site is approximately 11 acres, Baist Atlas No. 4, page 27. The site was previously owned and was part of St. Anselm's Abbey, the present applicant for this planned unit development is contract purchaser from the Abbey. The site is basically unimproved consisting of a wooded area and grassland.

3. The subject site is presently zoned R-2 (one-family semi-detached dwelling, minimum lot width of 30 feet, minimum lot area of 3,000 square feet, percentage of lot occupancy 40, 3 stories and 40 feet height limit) and R-1-B (one-family detached dwelling, minimum lot width of 50 feet, minimum lot area of 5,000 square feet, percentage of lot occupancy 40, 3 stories and 40 feet height limit). Approximately 359,370 square feet of the site is zoned R-1-B which would permit 71 single-family detached dwelling units to be constructed. The remaining portion of the site, approximately 119,790 square feet is zoned R-2, using an average minimum lot size of 3,500 square feet, 34 dwelling units could be constructed on this portion of the site. A total of 105 dwelling units could be built on the site under present zoning.

4. The preliminary application for this planned unit development requests that the zoning of the subject site be changed to R-3 (row dwelling, minimum lot width of 20 feet, minimum lot area of 2,000 square feet, percentage of lot occupancy 60, 3 stories and 40 feet height limit).

5. The preliminary application proposes the construction of 122 townhouses for owner occupancy as condominiums. Each house will site on its own lot with its own yard. All common areas such as streets, walks, green spaces and parks will be held in common ownership under a home owners' association and maintained by the association through monthly assessments. Each unit will contain a minimum of three bedrooms.

6. The site of the proposed planned unit development is bounded on the north by Fort Drive Park, a United States Park administered by the National Park Service. The area west and southwest of the site is zoned R-2 (specifications set out above). The area east and southeast of the site is zoned R-1-B (specifications set out above).

7. This proposed planned unit development would face Gallatin Street, N.E., a secondary arterial, which feeds into such major arterial streets as Michigan Avenue approximately one mile to the east, Sargent Road and South Dakota Avenue approximately one to two miles to the west.

8. The staff of the Zoning Commission recommended approval of this planned unit development subject to four conditions relating to design elements providing a transition

between townhouses and single family detached units, fire hydrant water main installation, accessibility for fire apparatus and grading of the northern slope to prevent a serious run-off problem.

9. The Zoning Advisory Council recommended approval of this preliminary application subject to the same four conditions recommended by the staff of the Zoning Commission and set out in paragraph 10, supra.

10. The District of Columbia Department of Highways and Traffic found no objections to the proposed development.

11. The District of Columbia office of Housing Programs endorsed this preliminary application for a planned unit development.

12. Substantial citizen opposition to the planned unit development was evinced at the public hearing in this case from the Queens Chapel Citizens Association, the Upper Northeast Coordinating Council, and the North Michigan Park Civic Association.

13. Representatives and members of the Queens Chapel Citizens Association offered testimony against the planned unit development. The jurisdiction of the Queens Chapel Citizens Association lies between South Dakota Avenue, Michigan Avenue, Eastern Avenue, (Gallatin Street) and 14th Street, N.E. and contains 320 detached single-family dwelling units. The subject site is on the western border of the Association along 14th Street, N.E.

14. The residential neighborhood adjacent to the subject site of the proposed planned unit development is characterized by a median income of \$30,000 per household and is composed of skilled workers and professionals. The neighborhood is stable, in that fewer than 10 families out of the more than 200 who moved into the area in the early 1960's have relocated elsewhere.

15. The proposed planned unit development would allow the construction of row dwellings whose back yards would face the frontages of existing adjacent one family detached dwelling units.

16. The preliminary site plan submitted by the applicant introduces a new building type (row-dwelling) into a single-family residential area comprised of detached and semi-detached dwellings. The configuration of the clustered row dwellings, while not necessarily inappropriate to the site itself, bears no design relationship to the surrounding residential area. While the preliminary site plan does offer significant amenities to potential residents of the planned community itself, by preserving trees and other natural features of the site, it does not provide a suitable transition between clustered row-dwellings within the site and the semi-detached and detached dwellings that face the site. Additionally, the vehicular circulation plan bears little or no relationship to the established road pattern of the area.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. This preliminary application, as presently designed, is not compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and would

constitute a change in prevailing land-use and zoning patterns in the neighborhood which change has the potential for affecting adversely the stability of the area and of land values therein.

2. As presently designed, the preliminary site plan is not in harmony with the zone plan of the area as embodied in the Zoning Regulations and Map.

DECISION

The Commission believes that approval of this preliminary application would not be in the best interest of the surrounding neighborhood in that, as noted in the factual findings above, the plan would introduce a configuration of dwelling units out of keeping with the area surrounding the site in question, without a suitable transition to render the plan compatible with the surroundings.

The Commission does not, however, believe that clustered dwellings for sale as condominiums can never be introduced into large vacant tracts of land in the city. It is essential, in our view, that such new clustered developments be designed so as to blend into their surroundings without abrupt change in road patterns and building types. Suitable buffering by landscaping and by provision of detached and semi-detached units at the edge of such sites facing on streets with similar existing dwelling types should be provided.

The applicant may consult with both residents of the area and appropriate agencies of the District of Columbia Government if he wishes to devise and submit a new plan for the development of the site in question, in a manner more consistent with the established development pattern of the area. The Commission is denying this application without prejudice to the right of the applicant to submit a new application following appropriate discussion with interested citizens and appropriate government agencies.

Upon consideration of the findings of fact and conclusions of law herein, the Zoning Commission hereby ORDERS DENIAL without prejudice of this preliminary application for a planned unit development under Article 75 of the D.C. Zoning Regulations.

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George M. White
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Richard L. Stanton
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ATTEST: Martin Klauber
Martin Klauber
Executive Secretary

Vice-Chairman Nevius respectfully dissents from this Order
of the Commission.